

The Awan Congressional Scandal

Group of IT aides hired by 44 House Democrats gained unauthorized access to congressional servers

TIMELINE

1997

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Imran Awan arrives in the United States from Pakistan under the diversity lottery program.

2000



Imran Awan begins working as an IT contractor in Congress for InterAmerica.

2004



Imran Awan gains American citizenship.


DREW ANGERER/GETTY IMAGES



Imran Awan becomes a direct employee of Rep. Xavier Becerra (D-Calif.), Rep. Gregory Meeks (D-N.Y.), and three other House Democrats.

2005

DAILYCALLER.COM



Imran Awan hits the congressional pay cap, making as much as a congressman. His brother Abid Awan joins the payroll.

2007

BOYD NET



Abid Awan hits the pay cap. Imran Awan's wife, Hina Alvi Awan, joins the payroll.

2009



Abid Awan opens a car dealership, Cars International A. He reportedly takes out a loan of \$100,000 from Ali al-Attar, an Iraqi political figure of Iranian heritage, who is wanted by the IRS and FBI on unrelated tax fraud charges.

2011



Abid Awan's wife, Natalia Sovo, is added to the House payroll.

2012



Abid Awan files for bankruptcy, discharging \$1.1 million in debts.



Rao Abbas is added to the House payroll as IT administrator. Bankruptcy documents show Abid Awan owed him money. Abbas's most recent job was working at McDonald's.

2013



A high school friend of Imran Awan, Hasseb Rana, is hired by congressmen. Rana's father says Imran made him do the work of others, and he quit in frustration.

2014

DAILYCALLER.COM



Imran's brother Jamal Awan joins the payroll at age 20 and is soon making as much as a congressman.

2015



Police reports show that between October 2015 and July 2016, two women of Pakistani origin call the police about Imran Awan. One of the women is bloodied when police arrived on the scene.

SINEMA.HOUSE.GOV



Rep. Kyrsten Sinema (D-Ariz.) fires Jamal Awan for "incompetence," while other House Democrats keep the IT staffers on their payroll.

2016

SPENCER PLATT/GETTY IMAGES



According to an investigation by the House Office of Inspector General, \$120,000 worth of equipment goes missing from a congressional office. It is later reported to be the office of Rep. Yvette Clarke (D-N.Y.), where Abid Awan was responsible for the equipment at the time.

APRIL



The Committee on House Administration notices the offices where the Awans work are falsifying invoices for tech equipment so that large purchases are treated as petty cash and not inventoried by central authorities. An employee of CDW Government, a major contractor, agreed to manipulate the invoices. Much of this equipment is missing, and the Awans' relatives later say it was shipped to Pakistan.


2016 (Cont.)

JULY



WikiLeaks begins publishing stolen DNC emails. Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-Fla.) resigns as its chair. The emails show Imran Awan had her password.

SEPTEMBER 20



The Committee on House Administration (CHA) and House leadership receive a briefing by the Office of Inspector General. The briefing reveals that the Awans were logging in to servers of 15 House members they didn't work for.

It also reveals that between October 2015 and April 2016, the Awans made excessive logons to a Democratic Caucus server and three of its workstations.

The main server was accessed 5,735 times during the time period, an average of 27 times per day.

SEPTEMBER 30



The inspector general considers this unusual since computers in offices in which they worked were accessed less than 60 times in total.

SEPTEMBER 30



The Office of Inspector General gives House leadership another briefing, this time warning of "continuing unauthorized access."

OCTOBER



The investigation is taken away from the inspector general and handed to Capitol Police, who don't have cybersecurity expertise.

2017

JANUARY



Imran Awan travels to Pakistan despite an ongoing investigation by Capitol Police.

JANUARY 18



According to an indictment, Imran Awan impersonates his wife, Hina Alvi Awan, to gain approval for a \$283,000 wire transfer to Pakistan from the Congressional Federal Credit Union. On the same day, Hina takes out \$202,859 from her retirement account, falsely claiming it would be for medical expenses.

JANUARY



Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-Fl.) adds Hina Alvi to her payroll. In addition to Imran, despite the ongoing investigation.

JANUARY 28



A server belonging to the House Democratic Caucus is physically stolen after the inspector general's report names it as evidence in a hacking probe, three senior government officials tell The Daily Caller.

FEBRUARY 2

HOUSE.GOV



Paul Irving, the House sergeant at arms, bans the IT workers from the House network.

FEBRUARY 2



The Committee on House Administration tells members and the public that the issue is "theft."

2017 (Cont.)

FEBRUARY 3

CHP SOMOGEVILLA/GETTY IMAGES



Most of the 44 congressmen who entrusted their data to the Awans fire them.

FEBRUARY



Imran Awan and Hina Alvi Awan hurriedly move out of their residence and rent it out to a Marine. Imran reportedly threatens to sue the Marine if he doesn't return IT equipment he forgot in the house. The Marine determines that the equipment is government property, and the FBI and Capitol Police collect it.

MARCH 5



Hina Alvi Awan goes to Pakistan with her children—without notifying their schools—and is found with \$12,400 in cash and with many of her possessions, some of which were in cardboard boxes.

APRIL



Imran Awan's stepmother, Samina Gilani, says in civil court documents that Imran wiretapped her and extorted her. The dispute involves money stored in Imran's father's name in Pakistan.

APRIL 6

Imran Awan leaves a laptop with the username "RepDWS" in a decommissioned phone booth in a House building around midnight, along with a letter to prosecutors.

MAY 18

Wasserman Schultz tells the Capitol Police chief that there will be "consequences" if he doesn't return the laptop to her, notwithstanding its status as evidence. She repeatedly implies it is "a member's." She hires an outside lawyer to block prosecutors from looking at it.

Congressional data belonging to at least 44 House Democrats has been put at risk by a group of IT aides. Imran Awan, a Pakistani national and naturalized American citizen, has worked for Congress since 2000. Several of his family members, including his brother Abid Awan and his wife Hina Alvi Awan, were added to the congressional payroll after Imran hit the pay cap—making as much as a congressman. The individuals were hired as IT aides and paid up to \$160,000 a year, despite having little to no IT experience. In total, six IT workers connected to Imran joined the payroll. In September 2016, the House Office of Inspector General briefed House leadership that the Awans had had frequent unauthorized access to congressional servers, including those of 15 members they were not employed by. They also made excessive logons to the Democratic Caucus server, on average

27 times per day, which according to the IG report could have been used to "store documents taken from other offices or evidence of other illicit activity." Two computers used by the Awans had Dropbox installed on them, which is prohibited under House rules. "While file sharing sites, such as Dropbox, have legitimate business purposes, use of such sites is also a classic method for insiders to exfiltrate data from an organization," the IG report states.

The IG report also states that thousands of files, many of which had the hallmarks of containing sensitive material, were found in the Dropbox account. It is unclear whether the files left Congress. However, the material the IT aides had access to would be of great interest to groups, businesses, and foreign intelligence agencies. In February 2017, four months after the IG sounded the alarm bell, the IT aides had their access to congressional servers revoked.



2017 (Cont.)

MAY



A House official tells The Daily Caller that the reason the Awans haven't been charged with Capitol Hill crimes is that members refuse to press charges.

JULY 24

Imran Awan tries to leave the country and is arrested by the FBI at the airport. The charges involve fraud in obtaining the money that was wired to Pakistan on Jan. 18, 2017. Prosecutors say Imran was carrying a phone on him whose contents had just been wiped, and a laptop with only one notable file on it, a résumé.

JULY 24

GOWENSLIVA.COM



It emerges that Imran Awan retained Chris Gowen, a former personal aide to Hillary and Bill Clinton, as his lawyer.

2017 (Cont.)


AUGUST

One of Hina Alvi Awan's homes is sold, and another is sold to Imran Awan's brother-in-law.

AUGUST 18

Imran Awan and Hina Alvi Awan are indicted for bank fraud for the retirement scheme and for getting a second mortgage by stating it would be reinvested in upgrades for the house, but instead sending it overseas. Imran is made to wear a GPS monitoring device. He and his wife are co-defendants.

AUGUST



Media reports reveal that Imran still has a secret email account, 123@mail.house.gov

AUGUST

Wasserman Schultz now says, "This was not my laptop. I have never seen that laptop. I don't know what's on the laptop."

2017 (Cont.)

SEPTEMBER 6



Hina Alvi Awan makes a deal with prosecutors to return to the United States.

SEPTEMBER




The Awans' lawyers accuse House members and staff of participating in cooking the books, saying that members "expect" IT staff like the Awans to "adjust the pricing" of equipment that is purchased. In response to questions about the high salaries the Awans received without having IT backgrounds, one of their lawyers says they got "on-the-job training."

SEPTEMBER 11

Lawyer Chris Gowen says the bank fraud was only discovered as a side effect of the underlying probe into the Awans' Capitol Hill activities.


2017 (Cont.)

SEPTEMBER 12



Intelligence committee members who employed the Awans told The Daily Caller that the issue is about nothing more than bank fraud—even though the whole family was banned from the House network six months before Imran Awan's arrest.

OCTOBER



Lawyer Chris Gowen says he feels "very strongly" that the "RepDWS" laptop should not be used as evidence, citing attorney-client privilege. There are months of delays as prosecutors discuss the point.

2018

MAY 4



The court date, postponed five times, is now set for this May.